



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20350

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SECNAVINST 5420.174C

NCPB

22 August 1984

**SECNAV INSTRUCTION 5420.174C**

**From: Secretary of the Navy**

**Subj: Review at the Level of the Navy Department of discharges from  
the Naval Service**

**Ref: (a) 10 U.S.C. 1553  
(b) DoD Directive 1332.28 of 11 August 1982 (NOTAL)  
(c) SECNAVINST 5420.135B  
(d) Public Law 98-209**

**Encl: (1) Department of the Navy Manual for Discharge Review 1984**

**1. Purpose**

a. To implement within the naval service the uniform policies, procedures and standards for the review of discharges established by the Secretary of Defense;

b. To state pertinent directives and policies;

c. To specify administrative procedures;

d. To assign support responsibilities; and

e. To provide for continuing oversight.

**2. Cancellation. SECNAV Instruction 5420.174B.**

**3. Background**

a. Reference (a) charges the Secretary of the Navy to establish a Board to review the discharge (other than a discharge by sentence of a general court-martial) of any former member of an armed force under the Secretary's jurisdiction. Subject to review by the Secretary, a Board established under the provisions of reference (a) may change a discharge.

b. The Naval Discharge Review Board was established in compliance with reference (a).

c. Reference (b) published uniform policies, procedures and standards for the review of discharges within the Armed Forces.

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d. The Naval Discharge Review Board is a component of the Naval Council of Personnel Boards, as defined in reference (c).

e. The Naval Discharge Review Board's authority to review discharges adjudged by special courts-martial shall not extend to altering the judgement of a court-martial except for purposes of clemency.

4. Summary of Revision. This revision contains a substantial number of changes and should be completely reviewed. Chapters three, four, five, eight and nine have been completely revised. The other chapters contain technical corrections.

5. Authority

a. The Naval Discharge Review Board is designated and directed to make final determinations as to whether discharges of former members of the Navy and Marine Corps should be changed, and the nature of the change, if warranted.

b. The decisions of the Naval Discharge Review Board shall be final, subject to review by the Secretary, as specified in enclosure (1).

c. The President of the Naval Discharge Review Board shall transmit for Secretarial review any case which he believes is of significant interest to the Secretary.

6. Action. Organizations of the Department of the Navy and elements of the discharge review system described in enclosure (1) shall act in accordance with the provisions of the enclosure so as to facilitate proper and effective review of naval discharges.

7. Forms. SF 180 is available from local GSA stores. DD 293 is available from the Naval Discharge Review Board at 801 North Randolph Street, Suite 905, Arlington, Virginia, 22203.



CHASE UNTERMEYER  
Assistant Secretary of the Navy  
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

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## CHAPTER 1

## DEFINITIONS

## 1.1 Naval Service

The Naval Service is comprised of the uniformed members of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps, including active and inactive reserve components

## 1.2 Naval Discharge Review Board

An administrative board, referred to as the "NDRB" established by the Secretary of the Navy pursuant to Title 10, United States Code, section 1553, for the review of discharges of former members of the Naval Service.

## 1.3 NDRB Panel

An element of the NDRB, consisting of five members, authorized to review discharges. In plenary review session, an NDRB panel acts with the authority delegated by the Secretary of the Navy to the Naval Discharge Review Board.

## 1.4 NDRB Traveling Panel

A NDRB Panel that travels for the purpose of conducting personal appearance discharge review hearings at locations outside of the National Capital Region (NCR).

## 1.5 President of the NDRB

A senior officer of the Naval Service designated by the Secretary of the Navy who is responsible for the direct supervision of the discharge review function within the Naval Service. (See Chapter 3.)

## 1.6 Presiding Officer, NDRB Panel

The senior member of an NDRB Panel shall normally be the Presiding Officer. He/she shall convene, recess and adjourn the NDRB Panel as appropriate.

## 1.7 Discharge

In the context of the review function prescribed by 10 U.S.C. 1553, a discharge or dismissal is a complete separation from the Naval Service, other than one pursuant to the sentence of a general court-martial.

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By reason of usage, the term "discharge" is predominantly applicable to the separation of enlisted personnel for any reason, and the term "dismissal" to the separation of officers as a result of Secretarial or general court-martial action.

In the context of the mission of the NDRB, the term "discharge" used here shall, for purpose of ease of expression, include any complete separation from the naval service other than that pursuant to the sentence of general court-martial.

The term "discharge" also includes the type of discharge and the reason/basis for that discharge, e.g., Other Than Honorable/Misconduct (Civil Conviction).

#### 1.8 Administrative Discharge

A discharge upon expiration of enlistment or required period of service, or prior thereto, in a manner prescribed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps or the Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command, but specifically excluding separation by sentence of a court-martial.

#### 1.9 Types of Administrative Discharges

A determination reflecting a member's military behavior and performance of duty during a specific period of service. The three characterizations are:

a. Honorable. A separation from the naval service with honor. The issuance of an Honorable Discharge is contingent upon proper military behavior and performance of duty.

b. Under Honorable Conditions (also termed General Discharge). A separation from the naval service under honorable conditions. The issuance of a discharge under honorable conditions is contingent upon military behavior and performance of duty which is not sufficiently meritorious to warrant an Honorable Discharge.

c. Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (formerly termed Undesirable Discharge). A separation from the naval service under conditions other than honorable. It is issued to terminate the service of a member of the naval service for one or more of the reasons/bases listed in the Naval Military Personnel Manual, Marine Corps Separation and Retirement Manual and their predecessor publications.

##### d. Entry Level Separation

(1) A separation initiated while a member is in entry level status will be described as an Entry Level Separation except in the following circumstances:

(a) When characterization under Other Than Honorable Conditions is authorized and is warranted by the circumstances of the case; or

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(b) When characterization of service as Honorable is clearly warranted by the presence of unusual circumstances including personal conduct and performance of naval duty and is approved on a case-by-case basis by the Secretary of the Navy. This characterization will be considered when the member is separated by reason of Selected Changes in Service Obligation, Convenience of the Government, or Disability.

(2) With respect to administrative matters outside the administrative separation system that require a characterization of service as Honorable or General, an Entry Level Separation shall be treated as the required characterization. In accordance with 1163 of title 10, United States Code (1982), an Entry Level Separation for a member of a Reserve component separated from the Delayed Entry Program is under honorable conditions.

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### 1.10 Reason/Basis for Administrative Discharge

The terms "reason for discharge" and "basis for discharge" have the same meaning. The first is a Navy term and the second is a Marine Corps term. These terms identify why an administrative discharge was issued, e.g., Convenience of the Government, Misconduct. Reasons/bases for discharge are found in the Naval Military Personnel Manual and Marine Corps Separation and Retirement Manual as well as predecessor publications.

### 1.11 Punitive Discharge

A discharge awarded by sentence of a court-martial. There are two types of punitive discharges:

a. Bad Conduct. A separation from the naval service under conditions other than honorable. It may be effected only as a result of the approved sentence of a general or special court-martial.

b. Dishonorable. A separation from the naval service under dishonorable conditions. It may be effected only as a result of the approved sentence of a general court-martial.

### 1.12 Clemency Discharge

The clemency discharge was created by the President on September 16, 1974, in his Proclamation 4313, "Announcing a Program for the Return of Vietnam Era Draft Evaders and Military Deserters." Upon issuance to individuals who have an undesirable discharge or a punitive discharge, a clemency discharge serves as a written testimonial to the fact that the individual has satisfied the requirements of the President's program, and has fully earned his/her return to the mainstream of American society in accordance with that program.

The clemency discharge is a neutral discharge, neither honorable nor less than honorable. It does not effect a change in the characterization of the individual's military service as having been under other than honorable condition, nor does it serve to change, seal, erase or in any way modify the individual's past military record. Therefore, if the underlying discharge was issued as a result of a general court-martial, the issuance of a Clemency Discharge does not subject the underlying characterization to review under reference (a). Clemency discharges are issued by the Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command or the Commandant of the Marine Corps when an individual has met the requirements of the Presidential Proclamation.

### 1.13 Application

In the context of this Manual, a written application to the NDRB for the review of a discharge submitted by a former member of the naval service or,

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where a former member is deceased or incompetent, by spouse, next of kin or legal representative. Department of Defense Form 293 must be used for the application.

#### 1.14 Applicant

A former member of the naval service who has been discharged administratively in accordance with the directives of the naval service or by sentence of a special court-martial under Title 10, U.S.C., 801 et seq. (Uniform Code of Military Justice) and, in accordance with statutory and regulatory provisions:

a. Whose case is considered by the NDRB at the request of the former member, or, if authorized under paragraph 1.13, the surviving spouse, next-of-kin or legal representative, or

b. Whose case is considered on the NDRB's own motion.

#### 1.15 Next of Kin

The person or persons in the highest category of priority as determined by the following list (categories appear in descending order of priority): Surviving legal spouse; children (whether by current or prior marriage) age 18 years or older in descending precedence by age; father or mother, unless by court order custody has been vested in another (adoptive parent takes precedence over natural parent); siblings (whole or half) age 18 years or older in descending precedence by age; grandfather or grandmother; any other relative (precedence to be determined in accordance with the civil law of descent of the deceased former member's state of domicile at time of death).

#### 1.16 Counsel/Representative

An individual or agency designated by the applicant who agrees to represent the applicant in a case before the NDRB. It includes, but is not limited to: a lawyer who is a member of the bar of a Federal Court or of the highest court of a State; an accredited representative designated by an organization recognized by the Administrator of Veterans Affairs; a representative from a State agency concerned with veterans affairs; or a representative from private organizations or local Government agencies.

#### 1.17 Discharge Review

A nonadversary administrative reappraisal at the level of the Navy Department of discharges from the naval service. The object of the reappraisal is to determine whether the discharge should be changed, and if so, the nature of the change. This reappraisal includes the type and reason/basis for separation, the procedures followed in accomplishing separation, and the characterization of service. This term includes determinations made under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code, Section 3103(2).

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**1.18 Documentary Discharge Review**

A formal session of the NDRB convened for the purpose of reviewing, on the basis of documentary data, an applicant's discharge. The documentary data shall include the application together with all information accompanying that application, available service and medical records, and any other information considered relevant by the NDRB.

**1.19 Personal Appearance Discharge Hearing**

A formal session of the NDRB convened for the purpose of reviewing an applicant's discharge on the basis of a personal appearance, as well as documentary data. The personal appearance may be by the applicant or by a representative of the applicant, or both.

**1.20 National Capital Region (NCR)**

The District of Columbia; Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties in Virginia; and all cities and towns included within the outer boundaries of the foregoing counties.

**1.21 Decisional Document**

The written recordation of the applicant's summary of service, the issue or issues presented together with any evidence offered in support of the application, the NDRB's response to the issue or issues, the votes of the members of the panel, and any recommendations or responses by the President of the NDRB or the Secretarial Reviewing Authority (SRA). The decisional document is promulgated by the "en bloc letter".

**1.22 Recorder, NDRB Panel**

A panel member responsible for briefing an applicant's case from the documentary evidence available prior to a discharge review, presenting the brief to the panel considering the application, performing other designated functions during personal appearance discharge hearings, and drafting the decisional document subsequent to the hearing.

**1.23 Complainant**

A former member of the Armed Forces (or the former member's counsel) who submits a complaint under reference (b) with respect to the decisional document issued in the former member's own case; or a former member of the Armed Forces (or the former member's counsel) who submits a complaint under reference (b) stating that correction of the decisional document will assist the former member in preparing for an administrative or judicial proceeding in which the former member's own discharge will be at issue.

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## CHAPTER 2

## AUTHORITY/POLICY FOR DEPARTMENTAL DISCHARGE REVIEW

## 2.1 Authority

The Naval Discharge Review Board, established pursuant to 10 U.S.C. Section 1553, is a component of the Naval Council of Personnel Boards. By SECNAVINST 5430.7L, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) is authorized and directed to act for the Secretary of the Navy within his assigned area of responsibility and exercises oversight over the Naval Council of Personnel Boards. Reference (c) states the organization, mission, duties and responsibilities of the Naval Council of Personnel Boards to include the Naval Discharge Review Board. The Chief of Naval Operations established the Office of Naval Disability Evaluation and Navy Council of Personnel Boards on 1 October 1976 (OPNAVNOTE 5450 Ser 09B26/535376 of 9 Sep 1976 (Canc frp: Apr 77)). The Chief of Naval Operations approved the change in name of the Office of Naval Disability Evaluation and Navy Council of Personnel Boards to Naval Council of Personnel Boards on 1 February 1977 (OPNAVNOTE 5450 Ser 09B26/32648 of 24 Jan 1977 (Canc frp: Jul 77)) with the following mission statement:

"To administer and supervise assigned boards and councils."

## 2.2 Statutory/Directive Authority

The NDRB, in its conduct of discharge review, shall be guided by the applicable statutes, regulations, and manuals and directives of the Department of the Navy, and other written public expressions of policy by competent authority:

## a. Reference (a), Review of discharge or dismissal

"The Secretary concerned shall, after consulting the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, establish a board of review, consisting of five members, to review the discharge or dismissal (other than a discharge or dismissal by sentence of a general court-martial) of any former member of an armed force under the jurisdiction of his department upon its own motion or upon the request of the former member or, if he is dead, his surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative. A motion or request for review must be made within 15 years after the date of the discharge or dismissal."

A board established under this section may, subject to review by the Secretary concerned, change a discharge or dismissal, or issue a new

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discharge, to reflect its findings.

A review by the board established under this section shall be based on the records of the armed forces concerned and such other evidence as may be presented to the board. A witness may present evidence to the board in person or by affidavit. A person who requests a review under this section may appear before the board in person or by counsel or an accredited representative or an organization recognized by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs under Chapter 59 of Title 38."

b. Public Law 95-126. See Appendix D.

c. Reference (b). This provides for uniform standards and procedures for review of discharges from the military services of the Department of Defense. The provisions of reference (b) are incorporated in this Manual.

d. The Secretary of Defense memoranda dated August 13, 1971 and April 28, 1972 (NOTAL). These directed a review for recharacterization of (1) administrative discharges under other than honorable conditions issued solely on the basis of personal use of drugs or possession of drugs for the purpose of such use, and (2) punitive discharges and dismissals issued solely for conviction of personal use of drugs and possession for the purpose of such use for those discharges executed as a result of a case completed or in process on or before July 7, 1971. (See Appendix B).

e. Department of Defense Directive 1332.14 of 28 January 1982 (NOTAL). This prescribes policy, standards and procedures which govern the administrative separation of enlisted persons from the Armed Forces.

### 2.3 Broad Objectives of Naval Discharge Review

Naval discharge review shall have as its broad objectives:

- a The furtherance of good order and discipline.
- b The correction of injustice or inequity in the discharge issued.
- c The correction of administrative or clerical errors.

### 2.4 Eligibility for Naval Discharge Review

Any former member of the Naval Service, eligible for review under reference (a) or surviving spouse, next of kin or legal representative, shall upon submission of an application be afforded a review of the member's discharge from the Naval Service as provided in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6.

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Discharge review may also be initiated on the motion of the NDRB (See paragraph 2.20).

## 2.5 Authority for Review of Naval Discharges; Jurisdictional Limitations

### a. The Board shall have no authority to:

- (1) review a discharge or dismissal resulting from a general court-martial;
- (2) alter the judgment of a court-martial, except the discharge or dismissal awarded may be changed for purposes of clemency;
- (3) revoke any discharge or dismissal;
- (4) reinstate a person in the naval service;
- (5) recall a former member to active duty;
- (6) change a reenlistment code;
- (7) make recommendations for reenlistment to permit entry in the naval service or any other branch of the Armed Forces;
- (8) cancel or void enlistment contracts; or
- (9) change the reason for discharge from or to a physical disability

b. Review of naval discharges shall not be undertaken in instances where the elapsed time between the date of discharge and the date of receipt of application for review exceeds fifteen years.

## 2.6 Jurisdictional Determinations

The determination as to whether the NDRB has jurisdiction in any case shall be predicated on the policy stated in paragraph 2.5. Decisions shall be made by administrative action without referral to the NDRB. Normally, they shall be made by the Executive Secretary of the NDRB, or they may be referred to the President, NDRB.

## 2.7 Disposition of Applications for Discharge Review

One of three dispositions will be made of an application for review of a discharge:

### a. The application may be rejected for reason of

- (1) absence of jurisdiction;
- (2) previous review on the same evidence; or

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- b. The application may be withdrawn by the applicant; or
- c. The application may be accepted and the discharge reviewed by the NDRB, resulting in

- (1) change to the discharge, or
- (2) no change

## 2.8 Implementation of NDRB Decisions

The Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Chief of Naval Operations are responsible for implementing Naval Discharge Review Board decisions within their respective services. The Commandant of the Marine Corps shall be notified of decisions in each discharge review case and shall implement the decisions within the Marine Corps. The Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command, acting for the Chief of Naval Operations and Chief of Naval Personnel, shall be notified of decisions in each discharge review case and shall implement the decisions within the Navy.

## 2.9 Evidence Supporting Applications

In the absence of law, evidence or policy to the contrary, naval discharges shall be considered just, equitable and proper as issued. When hearings are scheduled, applicants must be prepared to present their case at the scheduled time. In the absence of any other evidence, naval discharge review shall be undertaken by examination of available service and health records of the applicant. Normally, the responsibility for presenting evidence from outside available service and health records shall rest with the applicant. Applications in which elements of relevant information are obviously omitted will be returned for completion and resubmission.

## 2.10 Review Action in Instances of Unavailable Records

In the event that Department of the Navy personnel or health records associated with a requested review of discharge are not located at the custodial activity, the following action shall be taken by the NDRB prior to consideration of the request for discharge review.

- a. A certification that the records are unavailable shall be obtained from the custodial activity.
- b. The applicant shall be notified of the situation and requested to provide such information and documents as may be desired in support of the request for discharge review. A period of not less than 30 days shall be allowed for such documents to be submitted. At the expiration of this time period, the review may be conducted with information available to the NDRB.
- c. The presumption of regularity in the conduct of government affairs may be applicable in instances of unavailable records depending on the circumstances of the case. (See paragraph 2.11)

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## 2.11 Regularity of Government Affairs

There is a presumption of regularity in the conduct of governmental affairs. This presumption can be applied in any review unless there is substantial credible evidence to rebut the presumption.

## 2.12 Availability of Records

a. Before applying for discharge review, potential applicants or their designated representatives may obtain copies of their military personnel records by submitting a General Services Administration Standard Form 180, "Request Pertaining to Military Records," to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132. Once the application for discharge review (DD Form 293) is submitted, an applicant's military records are forwarded to the NDRB where they cannot be reproduced. Submission of a request for an applicant's military records, including a request under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5, USC 552) or Privacy Act (Title 5, USC 552a) after the DD Form 293 has been submitted, shall result automatically in the temporary suspension of processing of the application for discharge review until the requested records are sent to an appropriate location for copying, are copied, and are returned to the headquarters of the NDRB. Processing of the application shall then be resumed at whatever stage of the discharge review process is practicable. Applicants are encouraged to submit any request for their military records before applying for discharge review rather than after submitting DD Form 293 to avoid delays in processing of applications and scheduling of reviews. Applicants and their counsel may also examine their military personnel records at the site of their scheduled review before the hearing. The NDRB shall notify applicants of the dates the records are available for examination in their standard scheduling information.

b. If the NDRB is not authorized to provide copies of documents that are under the cognizance of another government department, office, or activity, applications for such information must be made by the applicant to the cognizant authority. The NDRB shall advise the applicant of the mailing address of the government department, office, or activity to which the request should be submitted.

c. If the official records relevant to the discharge review are not available at the agency having custody of the records, the applicant shall be so notified and requested to provide such information and documents as may be desired in support of the request for discharge review. A period of not less than 60 days shall be allowed for such documents to be submitted. At the expiration of this period, the review may be conducted with information available to the NDRB.

d. The NDRB may take steps to obtain additional evidence that is relevant to the discharge under consideration beyond that found in the official military records or submitted by the applicant, if a review of available

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evidence suggests that it would be incomplete without the additional information, or when the applicant presents testimony or documents that require additional information to evaluate properly. Such information shall be made available to the applicant, upon request, with appropriate modifications regarding classified material.

(1) In any case heard on request of an applicant, the NDRB shall provide the applicant and counsel or representative, if any, at a reasonable time before initiating the decision process, a notice of the availability of all regulations and documents to be considered in the discharge review, except for documents in the official personnel or medical records and any documents submitted by the applicant. The NDRB shall also notify the applicant or counsel or representative (a) of the right to examine such documents or to be provided with copies of the documents upon request; (b) of the date by which such requests must be received; and (c) of the opportunity to respond within a reasonable period of time to be set by the NDRB.

(2) When necessary to acquaint the applicant with the substance of a classified document, the classifying authority, on the request of the NDRB, shall prepare a summary of or an extract from the document, deleting all references to sources of information and other matters, the disclosure of which, in the opinion of the classifying authority, would be detrimental to the national security interests of the United States. Should preparation of such summary be deemed impracticable by the classifying authority, information from the classified source shall not be considered by the NDRB in its review of the case.

e. Regulations of a military department may be obtained at many installations under the jurisdiction of the Military Department concerned or by writing to the following address:

DA Military Review Boards Agency  
Attention: SFBA (Reading Room)  
Room 1E520  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310

#### 2.13 Attendance of Witnesses

Arrangement for attendance of witnesses testifying in behalf of the applicant at discharge review hearings is the responsibility of the applicant. The NDRB is not authorized to subpoena or otherwise require their presence.

#### 2.14 Applicant's Expenses

Unless otherwise specified by law or regulation, expenses incurred by the applicant, witnesses, or counsel/representative will not be paid by the Department of Defense. The NDRB is not authorized to issue orders or other process to enable the applicant to appear in person.

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**2.15 Military Representation**

Military officers, except those acting pursuant to specific detailing by appropriate authorities desiring to act for or on behalf of an applicant in the presentation of a case before a NDRB Panel are advised to consult legal counsel before undertaking such representation. Such representation may be prohibited by Title 18, United States Code, Section 205.

**2.16 Failure to Appear at a Hearing or Respond to a Scheduling Notice**

a. Except as otherwise authorized by the Secretary concerned, further opportunity for a hearing shall not be made available in the following circumstances to an applicant who has requested a hearing:

(1) when the applicant has been sent a letter containing the month and location of a proposed hearing and fails to make a timely response; or

(2) when the applicant, after being notified by letter of the time and place of the hearing, fails to appear at the appointed time, either in person or by representative, without having made a prior, timely request for a continuation, postponement, or withdrawal.

b. In such cases, the applicant shall be deemed to have waived the right to a hearing, and the NDRB shall complete its review of the discharge. Further request for a hearing shall not be granted unless the applicant can demonstrate that the failure to appear or respond was due to circumstances beyond the applicant's control.

**2.17 Reconsideration**

A discharge review shall not be subject to reconsideration except:

a. When the only previous consideration of the case was on the motion of the NDRB;

b. When the original discharge review did not involve a personal hearing and a hearing is now desired, and the provisions of paragraph 2.16 do not apply;

c. When changes in discharge policy are announced after an earlier review of an applicant's discharge, and the new policy is made expressly retroactive;

d. When the NDRB determines that policies and procedures under which the applicant was discharged differ in material respects from policies and procedures currently applicable on a service-wide basis to discharges of the type under consideration, provided that such changes in policies or procedures

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represent a substantial enhancement of the rights afforded an applicant in such proceedings;

e. When an individual is to be represented by counsel or representative, and was not so represented in any previous consideration of the case by the NDRB;

f. When the case was not previously considered under uniform standards published pursuant to Public Law 95-126 and such application is made within 15 years after the date of discharge; or

g. On the basis of presentation of new, substantial, relevant evidence not available to the applicant at the time of the original review. The decision whether evidence offered by an applicant in support of a request for reconsideration is in fact new, substantial, relevant, and was not available to the applicant at the time of the original review will be based on a comparison of such evidence with the evidence considered in the previous discharge review. If this comparison shows that the evidence submitted would have had a probable effect on matters concerning the propriety or equity of the discharge, the request for reconsideration shall be granted.

#### 2.18 Continuance and Postponements

a. A continuance of a discharge review hearing may be authorized by the President of the NDRB or presiding officer of the panel concerned, provided that such continuance is of reasonable duration and is essential to achieving a full and fair hearing. When a proposal for continuance is indefinite, the pending application shall be returned to the applicant with the option to resubmit when the case is fully ready for review.

b. Postponements of scheduled reviews normally shall not be permitted other than for demonstrated good and sufficient reason set forth by the applicant in a timely manner or for the convenience of the government.

#### 2.19 Withdrawal of Application

An applicant shall be permitted to withdraw an application without prejudice at any time before the scheduled review, except that failure to appear for a scheduled hearing shall not be construed or accepted as a withdrawal.

#### 2.20 Review on Motion of the NDRB

Reviews of Naval discharges may be initiated by the NDRB on its own motion (10 U.S.C. 1553) which includes reviews requested by the Veteran Administration under Title 38, U.S.C. 101, 3103 as amended by Public Law 95-126 of October 8, 1977 (See Appendix D).

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## 2.21 Scheduling of Discharge Reviews

a. If an applicant requests a personal appearance discharge review, or to be represented in absentia, the NDRB shall provide a hearing in the NCR or at another site within the forty-eight contiguous states.

b. The NDRB shall subsequently notify the applicant and representative (if any) in writing of the proposed personal appearance hearing time and place. This notice shall normally be mailed thirty to sixty days prior to the date of the hearing. If the applicant elects, this time limit may be waived and an earlier date set.

c. When an applicant requests a documentary review, the NDRB shall undertake the review as soon as practicable. Normally, documentary reviews shall be conducted in the order in which they are received.

## 2.22 Personal Appearance Discharge Hearing Sites

a. The NDRB shall be permanently located, together with its administrative staff, in the NCR. The NDRB shall routinely conduct personal appearance discharge reviews and documentary reviews at this, its permanent office.

b. In addition, as permitted by available resources, NDRB Panels shall travel to other selected sites within the contiguous 48 states for the purpose of conducting reviews. The selection of sites and the frequency of visits shall be predicated on the number of requests pending within a region and the availability of resources.

## 2.23 NDRB Support and Augmentation by Regular and Reserve Activities

a. When an NDRB Panel travels for the purpose of conducting hearings, it shall normally select Navy or Marine Corps installations in the area visited as review sites.

b. The NDRB Traveling Board shall normally consist of members from the NCPB and augmentees from regular and reserve Navy and Marine Corps sources, as required.

c. Navy and Marine Corps activities in the geographical vicinity of selected review sites shall provide administrative support and augmentation to an NDRB Panel during its visit where such assistance can be undertaken without interference with mission accomplishment. The NDRB shall coordinate requests for augmentees and administrative support through Commandant of the Marine Corps, Chief of Naval Reserve, as appropriate.

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d. The administrative staff of the NCPB shall undertake all arrangements for NDRB Traveling Panel visits and shall process associated review documents.

#### 2.24 Court-Martial Specifications, Presumption Concerning

a. Relevant and material facts stated in a court-martial specification, shall be presumed by the NDRB Panel as established facts. With respect to a discharge or dismissal adjudged by a court-martial case tried under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the action may extend only to change in the discharge or dismissal for purposes of clemency. This policy only applies to cases filed with the discharge review board after 6 December 1983.

b. Relevant and material facts stated in a court-martial specification, in the face of which the applicant requested a discharge for the good of the service to avoid trial by court-martial, shall be considered in accordance with the following:

(1) If the applicant/accused was required to admit the facts contained in the charge sheet, or if the discharge authority was required to find that the stated facts were true, then the NDRB can presume the truth of such facts, unless there is substantial credible evidence to rebut this presumption; or

(2) If the discharge in lieu of court-martial only required a valid preferral,\* the NDRB may presume that the signer either had personal knowledge of, or had investigated the matters set forth, and that the charges were true in fact to the best of the signer's knowledge and belief. The weight to be given this presumption in determining whether the facts stated in the charge sheet are true is a matter to be determined by the NDRB. To the extent that the discharge proceeding reflects an official determination that the facts stated in the charge sheet are true; that the applicant/accused admitted the facts stated in the charge sheet; or that the applicant/accused admitted guilt of the offense(s), then the presumption is strengthened. In accordance with paragraph B12f of enclosure (3) to reference (b), the presumption may be rebutted by "substantial credible evidence."

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\*Charges may be preferred by any person subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The charges must be signed and sworn to before a commissioned officer authorized to administer oaths, and shall state that the signer has personal knowledge of, or has investigated the matters set forth therein; and that the charges are true in fact to the best of the signer's knowledge and belief. 10 U.S.C. 830 (1976) (Art. 30 Uniform Code of Military Justice).

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## CHAPTER 3

DIRECTOR, NAVAL COUNCIL OF PERSONNEL BOARDS;  
PRESIDENT OF THE NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD; AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD

## 3.1 Mission

To administer and supervise assigned boards and councils within the Department of the Navy.

## 3.2 Functions: Director, Naval Council of Personnel Boards

- a. Make recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy regarding organization, tasking and resources of the NDRB and its associated administrative support.
- b. Submit recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy regarding policy and procedures for discharge review.
- c. Provide administrative and clerical support for NDRB.
- d. Inform the Secretary of the Navy of matters of interest to him.
- e. Maintain a system of records, including as a minimum:
  - (1) Records specified for the NDRB as stipulated in the procedures prescribed in Chapter 8 of this Manual.
  - (2) Records required for the administration of military and civilian personnel.
  - (3) Files of correspondence received and issued.
- f. Establish billet/position assignment criteria for the NDRB.
- g. Propose to the Secretary of the Navy, changes to this instruction.
- h. Issue requisite precepts and remove or add members to the NDRB from personnel detailed to serve on the Naval Council of Personnel Boards, or from personnel otherwise made available.

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3.3 Functions: President, Naval Discharge Review Board

- a. Exercise primary cognizance within the Department of the Navy for matters relating to discharge review.
- b. Supervise and direct the activities of the NDRB.
- c. Maintain appropriate liaison with discharge review activities in other services (use Army Discharge Review Board as focal point for service coordination).
- d. Maintain coordination with the Commandant of the Marine Corps (Code M) and the Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command in matters associated with discharge review.
- e. In conformance with SECNAVINST 5211.5C, protect the privacy of individuals in connection with discharge review.
- f. Assure that NDRB functions are administered in accordance with the appropriate Secretary of the Navy instructions dealing with privacy and access to information.
- g. Convene the NDRB as authorized by the Secretary of the Navy.
- h. Direct the movement of the NDRB Traveling Panel(s) on the basis of regional hearing requests.
- i. Monitor the performance of the naval discharge review system. Make recommendations for changes and improvements. Take action to avoid delays in processing of individual discharge review actions.
- j. Provide NDRB inputs for the maintenance of a public reading file and maintain associated NDRB indexes updated quarterly.

3.4 Responsibility for Department of the Navy support of the Naval Discharge Review Board

The Commandant of the Marine Corps; Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command, Commander, Naval Reserve Force; Commander, Naval Medical Command; and chiefs of other bureaus and offices of the Department of the Navy shall provide support, as requested, to the Naval discharge review process.

3.5 Functions of the CMC and CNO. In the Case of Navy, CNMPC, under the CNP, shall discharge responsibilities of the CNO

- a. Provide and facilitate access by the NDRB to service/health records and other data associated with performance of duty of applicants.

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b. Advise the NDRB of developments in personnel management which may have a bearing on discharge review judgments.

c. Implement the discharge review decisions of the NDRB and those of higher authority within respective areas of cognizance.

d. Include the record of NDRB proceedings as a permanent part of the service record of the applicant in each case.

e. Where appropriate, recommend cases for the NDRB to review on its own motion.

f. Provide qualified personnel as NDRB members, recorders and administrative staff.

g. Establish administrative procedures to ensure that if a member is separated from the Navy or the Marine Corps under other than fully honorable conditions, the member is advised of:

(1) the right to a review of his or her discharge under provisions of 10 U.S.C. 1553, and

(2) the procedures for applying for such a review.

h. Provide Navy and Marine Corps units and activities with information on the mission of the Naval Discharge Review Board through entries in appropriate personnel administration directives.

### 3.6 Functions of the Commander, Naval Medical Command

Under the CNO the COMNAVMEDCOM shall facilitate, as required, access by the NDRB to health records of applicants.

### 3.7 Functions of the CMC and CNO. In the case of Navy, the COMNAVRESFOR shall discharge the responsibilities of the CNO

a. Upon request and within available resources, provide qualified inactive duty reservists to serve as members of the NDRB.

b. Upon request, provide appropriate accommodations to the NDRB Traveling Panels for purposes of conducting reviews at Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Centers and aviation facilities.

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## CHAPTER 4

## PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT DISCHARGE REVIEW SYSTEM

## 4.1 Applicants

As defined in paragraph 1.14.

## 4.2 Naval Discharge Review Board

As defined in paragraph 1.2.

## 4.3 President, Naval Discharge Review Board

Supervises the Naval Discharge Review Board. (See Chapter 3.)

## 4.4 Director, Naval Council of Personnel Boards

Exercises administrative control and oversight of the Naval discharge review process. (See Chapter 3.)

## 4.5 Commandant of the Marine Corps or the Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command, under the Chief of Naval Personnel, acting for the Chief of Naval Operations.

Personnel managers of the Marine Corps and the Navy; responsible for providing limited support to the Naval Discharge Review Board and for implementation of departmental discharge review decisions. (See Chapter 3.)

## 4.6 Commander, Naval Medical Command, under the Chief of Naval Operations

Custodian of Navy and Marine Corps health records. (See Chapter 3.)

## 4.7 Commander, Naval Reserve Force, under the Chief of Naval Operations

Manages Naval Reserve resources. Responsible for providing limited support to the Naval Discharge Review Board. (See Chapter 3.)

## 4.8 Secretary of the Navy

The final authority within the Department of the Navy in discharge review.

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## CHAPTER 5

PROCEDURAL RIGHTS OF THE APPLICANT AND ADMINISTRATIVE  
ACTIONS PRELIMINARY TO DISCHARGE REVIEW

## 5.1 Procedural Rights of the Applicant

Each applicant has the following procedural rights:

- a. Within 15 years after the date of discharge, to make a written request for review of the applicant's discharge if the discharge was other than the result of a general court-martial. The request may include such other statements, affidavits, or documentation as desired.
- b. To have that review conducted by the NDRB either in the NCR or other designated location, when a personal appearance discharge review is desired.
- c. To appear before the NDRB in person, with or without counsel/representative; with counsel/representative concurrence, to have counsel/representative present the applicant's case in the absence of the applicant; or to have the review conducted based on records and any additional documentation submitted by the applicant or counsel/representative.
- d. To request copies of any documents or other evidence to be considered by the NDRB in the review of the applicant's discharge or dismissal other than the documents or evidence contained in the official record or submitted by the applicant prior to the conduct of the formal review and to be afforded an opportunity to examine such other documents or evidence or to be provided with copies of them.
- e. To withdraw the request for discharge review without prejudice at any time prior to the scheduled review, except that failure to appear for a scheduled hearing shall not be construed or accepted as a withdrawal.
- f. To request a continuance of the review when the continuance is of a reasonable duration and essential to achieving a full and fair hearing. The request must indicate the reason why the continuance is required.
- g. To request postponement of the discharge review for good and sufficient reason set forth in a timely manner.
- h. To request reconsideration of the discharge review under the conditions set forth in paragraph 2.17.

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i. To have access to the information to be considered by the NDRB prior to the actual review of the applicant's case.

j. To have the applicant's right to privacy protected in any review conducted by the NDRB.

k. When appearing personally before the NDRB:

(1) To introduce witnesses, documents, and sworn or unsworn testimony.

(2) To present oral or written arguments personally or through counsel/representative.

l. To submit documents, affidavits, briefs or arguments in writing. When the counsel/representative appears in person before the NDRB, arguments may be presented orally.

m. To state clearly and specifically the issue or issues which the applicant desires the NDRB to answer in writing. These must be presented in writing on DD Form 293 by the applicant or counsel/representative.

n. To have the applicant's discharge reviewed under the standards of equity and propriety outlined in Chapter 9.

o. To be provided with a written decision on the applicant's review.

p. If the case is to be forwarded for Secretarial review, to present a timely statement rebutting any findings, conclusions, or reasons of the NDRB or the President, NDRB, which are alleged to be erroneous on the facts, against the substantial weight of the evidence, or contrary to law or governing regulation, prior to that Secretarial review.

## 5.2 Actions to be Taken by the Applicant Preliminary to Discharge Review

a. Application for Review of Discharge or Dismissal From the Armed Forces of the United States, DD Form 293 must be used in requesting a discharge review. DD Form 293 is available at most military installations and regional offices of the Veterans Administration.

This form is to be signed personally by the applicant. In the event the discharged individual is deceased or incompetent, the form must be signed by an authorized individual as discussed in paragraph 1.13 of this Manual.

b. The application is to be accompanied by:

(1) a copy of the certificate of discharge, if available;

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(2) a copy of the Armed Forces of the United States Report of Transfer or Discharge (DD-214), if available;

(3) certification of death, incompetency and evidence of relationship in applicable cases (paragraph 1.13);

(4) other statements, affidavits, depositions, documents and information desired by the applicant to be considered by the NDRB.

c. Correspondence relating to review of naval discharges should be addressed to:

Naval Discharge Review Board  
Suite 905 - 801 North Randolph Street  
Arlington, VA 22203

d. NDRB telephone number is (202) 696-4881.

### 5.3 NDRB Response to Application for Discharge Review

a. The NDRB shall acknowledge receipt of the application.

b. In the event a documentary review is requested, the applicant shall normally receive no further communication from the NDRB until notified of the decision in the case.

c. In the event a personal appearance discharge review is requested, the applicant shall be notified of the proposed time and place of this review and shall be advised of the availability of the official documents to be considered by the NDRB.

d. A copy of NDRB correspondence to an applicant shall be sent to the representative of record, if any.

### 5.4 NDRB Actions Preliminary to Discharge Review

a. When each application for discharge review is received by the NDRB, the service record and health record of the applicant will be requested from the appropriate record custodian.

b. Upon receipt, each record of service will be reviewed to determine whether or not the applicant appears to have been discharged under circumstances which might act as a bar to Veterans' Administration benefits under section 3103, Title 38, United States Code. These circumstances of discharge are:

(1) Discharge or dismissal by reason of the sentence of a general court-martial.

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(2) Discharge as a conscientious objector who refused to perform military duty, to wear the uniform or otherwise to comply with lawful orders of competent military authority.

(3) Discharge as a deserter.

(4) Discharge on the basis, or as part of the basis, of an absence without authority from active duty for a continuous period of at least 180 days, if such discharge was under conditions other than honorable. Additionally, such absence is computed without regard to the applicant's normal or adjusted expiration of term of service.

(5) Discharge or dismissal of an officer based on acceptance of the officer's resignation for the good of the service.

(6) Discharge, on his/her own application, during a period of hostilities, as an alien.

c. If it appears that the applicant was discharged under one or more of the circumstances outlined in paragraph 5.4b, a written notification will be sent which informs the applicant that:

(1) An initial service record review reveals that the discharge may have been awarded under circumstances which make the applicant ineligible for receipt of VA benefits regardless of any action taken by the NDRB.

(2) Separate action by the Board for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR) and/or the VA, in case of 180 days consecutive UA disqualification, may confer eligibility for VA benefits. Instructions for making application to the BCNR and for contacting the VA are provided.

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## CHAPTER 6

## NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD MISSION AND FUNCTIONS

## 6.1 General

The NDRB is a component of the Naval Council of Personnel Boards and has its offices located in the NCR. The NDRB conducts documentary reviews and personal appearance reviews in the NCR and, on a traveling basis, at selected sites within the 48 contiguous states. Regional site selection is predicated on the number of pending applications accumulated from a given geographical area and the resources available to support distant personal appearance reviews. The NDRB does not maintain facilities other than at its NCR offices. The primary sites are NCR; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; and San Francisco, CA.

## 6.2 Mission

To decide, in accordance with standards of naval law and discipline and the standards for discharge review set forth in Chapter 9, whether a discharge or dismissal from the naval service is proper and equitable, or whether it should be changed.

## 6.3 Functions

a. Meet as frequently as necessary to provide expeditious review of naval discharges.

b. Meet at locations within the 48 contiguous states as determined appropriate on the basis of the number of discharge review applications received from various geographical areas and of available resources and facilities.

c. Review applications for review of discharges.

d. In consonance with directives of higher authority and the policies set forth in this Manual, grant or deny change of discharges.

e. Promulgate decisions in a timely manner.

f. Maintain a system of records.

g. Maintain liaison in discharge review matters with:

(1) General Counsel of the Navy

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- (2) Commandant of the Marine Corps
- (3) Chief of Naval Operations
  - (a) Commander, Naval Reserve Force
  - (b) Commander Naval Medical Command
  - (c) Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command, under the Chief of Naval Personnel
- (4) Judge Advocate General of the Navy
- (5) Veterans' service organizations
- (6) Discharge review boards of the other services, using the Army Discharge Review Board as the focal point for service coordination.
- h. Protect the privacy of individuals whose records are reviewed.
- i. Maintain for public access a reading file and associated index of records of NDRB proceedings in all reviews undertaken subsequent to 1 July 1975.

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## CHAPTER 7

## ORGANIZATION OF THE NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD

## 7.1 Composition

The NDRB acting in plenary review session shall be composed of five members. Normally the members shall be career military officers, assigned to the Naval Council of Personnel Boards or otherwise made available; inactive duty officers of the Navy and Marine Corps Reserve may serve as members when designated to do so by the President, NDRB.

a. Presiding officers of the NDRB shall normally be Navy or Marine Corps officers in the grade of Captain/Colonel or above.

b. The remaining NDRB membership shall normally be not less than the grade of Lieutenant Commander/Major with preference being given to senior grades.

c. At least three of the five members of the NDRB shall belong to the service from which the applicant whose case is under review was discharged.

d. Individual membership in the NDRB may vary within the limitations of the prescribed composition.

e. Any member of a panel of the NDRB other than the presiding officer may act as recorder for cases assigned. The recorder will participate as a voting member of the panel.

## 7.2 Executive Management

The administrative affairs of the NDRB shall be managed by the Executive Secretary. This responsibility shall include schedules, records, correspondence and issuance of NDRB decisions.

## 7.3 Legal Counsel

Normally, the NDRB shall function without the immediate attendance of legal counsel. In the event that a legal advisory opinion is deemed appropriate by the NDRB, such opinion shall be obtained routinely by reference to the senior Judge Advocate assigned to the Office of the Director, Naval Council of Personnel Boards. In addition, the NDRB may request advisory opinions from staff offices of the Department of the Navy, including, but not limited to the General Counsel and the Judge Advocate General.

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## CHAPTER 8

## PROCEDURES OF NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD

## 8.1 Matters to be Considered in Discharge Review

In the process of its review of discharges, the NDRB shall examine available records and pertinent regulations of the Department of the Navy, together with such information as may be presented by the applicant and/or representative, which will normally include:

- a. The application for discharge review;
- b. Statements, affidavits or documentation, if any, accompanying the application or presented during hearings;
- c. Testimony, if any, presented during hearings;
- d. Service and health records;
- e. A brief of pertinent facts extracted from the service and health records, prepared by the NDRB recorder.

## 8.2 Applicant's Responsibilities

- a. Request for change of discharge. An applicant may request a change in the character of or reason for discharge (or both).

(1) Character of discharge. Block 7 of DD Form 293 provides an applicant an opportunity to request a specific change in character of discharge (for example, General Discharge to Honorable Discharge; Other than Honorable Discharge to General or Honorable Discharge). A person separated on or after 1 October 1982 while in an entry level status may request a change from Other Than Honorable Discharge to Entry Level Separation. A request for review from an applicant who does not have an Honorable Discharge will be treated as a request for a change to an Honorable Discharge unless the applicant requests a specific change to another character of discharge.

(2) Reason for discharge. Block 7 of DD Form 293 provides an applicant an opportunity to request a specific change in the reason for discharge. If an applicant does not request a specific change in the reason for discharge, the NDRB will presume that the request for review does not involve a request for change in the reason for discharge. Under its responsibility to examine the propriety and equity of an applicant's discharge, the NDRB will change the reason for discharge if such a change is warranted.

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(3) The applicant must ensure that issues submitted to the NDRB are consistent with the request for change in discharge set forth in block 7 of the DD Form 293. If an ambiguity is created by a difference between an applicant's issue and the request in block 7, the NDRB will respond to the issue in the context of the action requested in block 7. In the case of a personal appearance hearing, the NDRB will attempt to resolve the ambiguity under paragraph 8.2c.

b Request for consideration of specific issues. An applicant may request the Board to consider specific issues which, in the opinion of the applicant, form a basis for changing the character of or reason for discharge, or both. In addition to the guidance set forth in this section, applicants should consult the other sections in this manual before submitting issues for consideration by the Board.

(1) Submission of issues on DD Form 293. Issues must be provided to the NDRB on DD Form 293 (82 Nov) before the NDRB closes the review process for deliberation.

(a) Issues must be clear and specific. An issue must be stated clearly and specifically in order to enable the NDRB to understand the nature of the issue and its relationship to the applicant's discharge.

(b) Separate listing of issues. Each issue submitted by an applicant should be listed separately. Submission of a separate statement for each issue provides the best means of ensuring that the full import of the issue is conveyed to the NDRB.

(c) Use of DD Form 293. DD Form 293 provides applicants with a standard format for submitting issues to the NDRB, and its use:

1. Provides a means for an applicant to set forth clearly and specifically those matters that, in the opinion of the applicant, provide a basis for changing the discharge;

2. Assists the NDRB in focusing on those matters considered to be important by an applicant;

3. Assists the NDRB in distinguishing between a matter submitted by an applicant in the expectation that it will be treated as a decisional issue, and those matters submitted simply as background or supporting materials;

4. Provides the applicant with greater rights in the event that the applicant later submits a complaint concerning the decisional document;

5. Reduces the potential for disagreement as to the content of an applicant's issue.

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(d) Incorporation by reference. If the applicant makes an additional written submission, such as a brief, in support of the application, the applicant may incorporate by reference specific issues set forth in the written submission in accordance with the guidance on DD Form 293. The reference shall be specific enough for the NDRB to identify clearly the matter being submitted as an issue. At a minimum, it shall identify the page, paragraph, and sentence incorporated. Because it is to the applicant's benefit to bring such issues to the NDRB's attention as early as possible in the review, applicants who submit a brief are strongly urged to set forth all such issues as a separate item at the beginning of the brief. If it reasonably appears that the applicant inadvertently failed expressly to incorporate an issue which the applicant clearly identifies as an issue to be addressed by the NDRB, the NDRB shall respond to such an issue. (See paragraph 8.5 and 8.6.)

(e) Effective date of the new Form DD 293. With respect to applications pending (before November 1982, the effective date of the new DD Form 293), the NDRB shall consider issues clearly and specifically stated in accordance with the rules in effect at the time of submission. With respect to applications received after November 1982, if the applicant submits an obsolete DD Form 293, the NDRB shall accept the application, but shall provide the applicant with a copy of the new form and advise the applicant that it will only respond to issues submitted on the new form in accordance with this instruction.

(2) Relationship of issues to character of or reason for discharge. If the application applies to both character of and reason for discharge, the applicant is encouraged, but not required, to identify the issue as applying to either the character of or the reason for discharge (or both). Unless the issue is directed at the reason for discharge expressly or by necessary implication, the NDRB will presume that it applies solely to the character of discharge.

(3) Relationship of issues to the standards for discharge review. The NDRB reviews discharges on the basis of issues of propriety and equity. The standards used by the NDRB are set forth in paragraph 8.4. The applicant is encouraged to review those standards before submitting any issue upon which the applicant believes a change in discharge should be based.

(a) Issues concerning the equity of the discharge. An issue of equity is a matter that involves a determination whether a discharge should be changed under the equity standards of this part. This includes any issue, submitted by the applicant in accordance with paragraph 8.2b(1), that is addressed to the discretionary authority of the NDRB.

(b) Issues concerning the propriety of a discharge. An issue of propriety is a matter that involves a determination whether a discharge should be changed under the propriety standards of this part. This includes an applicant's issue, submitted in accordance with paragraph 8.2b(1), in which the applicant's position is that the discharge must be changed because of an

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error in the discharge pertaining to a regulation, statute, constitutional provision, or other source of law (including a matter that requires a determination whether, under the circumstances of the case, action by military authorities was arbitrary, capricious, or an abuse of discretion). Although a numerical reference to the regulation or other sources of law alleged to have been violated is not necessarily required, the context of the regulation or a description of the procedures alleged to have been violated normally must be set forth in order to inform the NDRB adequately of the basis for the applicant's position.

(c) The applicant's identification of an issue. The applicant is encouraged, but not required, to specify that each issue pertains to the propriety or the equity of the discharge. This will assist the NDRB in assessing the relationship of the issue to propriety or equity.

(4) Citation of matter from decisions. The primary function of the NDRB involves the exercise of discretion on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are not required to cite prior decisions as the basis for a change in discharge. If the applicant wishes to bring the NDRB's attention to a prior decision as background or illustrative material, the citation should be placed in a brief or other supporting documents. If, however, it is the applicant's intention to submit an issue that sets forth specific principles and facts from a specific cited decision, the following requirements with respect to applications received on or after November 27, 1982 apply:

(a) The issue must be set forth or expressly incorporated in the "Applicant's Issue" portion of DD Form 293.

(b) If an applicant's issue cites a prior decision (of the NDRB, another Board, an agency, or a court), the applicant shall describe the specific principles and facts that are contained in the prior decision and explain the relevance of cited matter to the applicant's case.

(c) To ensure timely consideration of principles cited from unpublished opinions (including decisions maintained by the Armed Forces Discharge Review Board/Corrective Board Reading Room), applicants must provide the NDRB with copies of such decisions or of the relevant portion of the treatise, manual, or similar source in which the principles were discussed. At the applicant's request, such materials will be returned.

(d) If the applicant fails to comply with requirements in paragraph 8.2b(4), the decisional document shall note the defect, and shall respond to the issue without regard to the citation.

c. Identification by the NDRB of issues submitted by an applicant. The applicant's issues shall be identified in accordance with this section after a review of the materials noted under paragraph 8.3, is made.

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(1) Issues on DD Form 293. The NDRB shall consider all items submitted as issues by an applicant on DD Form 293 (or incorporated therein).

(2) Amendment of issues. The NDRB shall not request or instruct an applicant to amend or withdraw any matter submitted by the applicant. Any amendment or withdrawal of an issue by an applicant shall be confirmed in writing by the applicant. Nothing in this provision:

(a) limits the NDRB's authority to question an applicant as to the meaning of such matter;

(b) precludes the NDRB from developing decisional issues based upon such questions;

(c) prevents the applicant from amending or withdrawing such matter any time before the NDRB closes the review process for deliberation; or

(d) prevents the NDRB from presenting an applicant with a list of proposed decisional issues and written information concerning the right of the applicant to add to, amend, or withdraw the applicant's submission. The written information will state that the applicant's decision to take such action (or decline to do so) will not be used against the applicant in the consideration of the case.

(3) Additional issues identified during a hearing. The following additional procedure shall be used during a hearing in order to promote the NDRB's understanding of an applicant's presentation. If, before closing the case for deliberation, the NDRB believes that an applicant has presented an issue not listed on DD Form 293, the NDRB may so inform the applicant, and the applicant may submit the issue in writing or add additional written issues at that time. This does not preclude the NDRB from developing its own decisional issues.

### 8.3 The Decisional Document

A decisional document shall be prepared for each review. At a minimum, this document shall contain:

a. The circumstances and character of the applicant's service as extracted from available service records, including health records, and information provided by other government authorities or the applicant, such as, but not limited to:

(1) information concerning the discharge under review, including:

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- (a) date (YYMMDD) of discharge
- (b) character of discharge
- (c) reason for discharge
- (d) the specific regulatory authority under which the discharge was issued
- (e) date (YYMMDD) of enlistment
- (f) period of enlistment
- (g) age at enlistment
- (h) length of service
- (i) periods of unauthorized absence
- (j) conduct and efficiency ratings (numerical or narrative)
- (k) highest rank achieved
- (l) awards and decorations
- (m) educational level
- (n) aptitude test scores
- (o) incidents of punishment pursuant to Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (including nature and date (YYMMDD) of offense or punishment)
- (p) convictions by court-martial
- (q) prior military service and type of discharge received.

(2) Any other matters in the applicant's record which pertains to the discharge or the issues, or provide a clearer picture of the overall quality of the applicant's service.

b. A list of the type of documents submitted by or on behalf of the applicant (including written briefs, letters of recommendation, affidavits concerning the circumstances of the discharge, or other documentary evidence), if any.

c. A statement whether the applicant testified, and a list of the type of witnesses, if any, who testified on behalf of the applicant.

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d. A notation whether the application pertained to the character of discharge, the reason for discharge, or both.

e. A list of the items submitted as issues on DD Form 293 or expressly incorporated therein and such other items submitted as issues by the applicant that are identified as inadvertently omitted. If the issues are listed verbatim on DD Form 293, a copy of the relevant portion of the form may be attached. Issues that have been withdrawn or modified with the written consent of the applicant need not be listed.

f. The response to the items submitted as issues by the applicant.

g. A list of decisional issues and a discussion of such issues.

h. The NDRB's conclusions on the following:

(1) Whether the character of or reason for discharge should be changed.

(2) The specific changes to be made, if any.

i. A record of the voting, including:

(1) The number of votes for the NDRB's decision and the number of votes in the minority, if any.

(2) The NDRB members' names and votes. The copy provided to the applicant may substitute a statement that the names and votes will be made available to the applicant at the applicant's request.

j. Advisory opinions, including those containing factual information, when such opinions have been relied upon for final decision or have been accepted as a basis for rejecting any of the applicant's issues. Such advisory opinions or relevant portions that are not fully set forth in the discussion of decisional issues or otherwise in response to items submitted as issues by the applicant shall be incorporated by reference. A copy of opinions incorporated by reference shall be appended to the decision and included in the record of proceedings.

k. The recommendation of the NDRB president when required.

l. The addendum of the SRA when required.

m. Index entries for each decisional issue under appropriate categories listed in the index of decisions.

n. An authentication of the document by an appropriate official.

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#### 8.4 Decision Process

a. The NDRB or the NDRB panel, as appropriate, shall meet in plenary session to review discharges and exercise its discretion on a case-by-case basis in applying the standards set forth in Chapter 9.

b. The presiding officer is responsible for the conduct of the discharge review. The presiding officer shall convene, recess, and adjourn the NDRB panel as appropriate and shall maintain an atmosphere of dignity and decorum at all times.

c. Each NDRB member shall act under oath or affirmation requiring careful, objective consideration of the application. NDRB members are responsible for eliciting all facts necessary for a full and fair review. They shall consider all information presented to them by the applicant. In addition, they shall consider available military service and health records, together with other records that may be in the files of the military department concerned and relevant to the issues before the NDRB, and any other evidence obtained in accordance with this Manual.

d. The NDRB shall identify and address issues after a review of the following material obtained and presented in accordance with this Manual and any implementing instructions of the NDRB: available official records, documentary evidence submitted by or on behalf of an applicant, presentation of a hearing examination, testimony by or on behalf of an applicant, oral or written arguments presented by or on behalf of an applicant, and any other relevant evidence.

e. If an applicant who has requested a hearing does not respond to a notification letter or does not appear for a scheduled hearing, the NDRB may complete the review on the basis of material previously submitted and available service records.

#### f. Application of standards

(1) When the NDRB determines that an applicant's discharge was improper, the NDRB will determine which reason for discharge should have been assigned based upon the facts and circumstances before the discharge authority, including the service regulations governing reasons for discharge at the time the applicant was discharged. Unless it is also determined that the discharge was inequitable, the provisions as to the characterization in the regulation under which the applicant should have been discharged will be considered in determining whether further relief is warranted.

(2) When the NDRB determines that an applicant's discharge was inequitable, any change will be based on the evaluation of the applicant's overall record of service and relevant regulations of the service of which the applicant was a member.

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g. Voting shall be conducted in closed session, a majority of the votes of the five members constituting the NDRB decision.

h. Details of closed session deliberations of the NDRB are privileged information and shall not be divulged.

i. There is no requirement for a statement of minority views in the event of a split vote.

j. The NDRB may request advisory opinions from appropriate staff officers of the naval service. These opinions are advisory in nature and are not binding on the NDRB in its decision-making process.

k. The preliminary determinations required by 38 U.S.C. 3103(e) shall be made upon majority vote of the NDRB concerned on an expedited basis. Such determination shall be based upon the standards set forth in this Manual.

#### 8.5 Response to Items Submitted as Issues by the Applicant

##### a. General guidance

(1) If any issue submitted by an applicant contains two or more clearly separate issues, the NDRB should respond to each issue under the guidance of this paragraph as if it had been set forth separately by the applicant.

(2) If an applicant uses a "building block" approach (that is, setting forth a series of conclusions on issues that lead to a single conclusion purportedly warranting a change in the applicant's discharge), normally there should be a separate response to each issue.

(3) Nothing in this paragraph precludes the NDRB from making a single response to multiple issues when such action would enhance the clarity of the decisional document, but such response must reflect an adequate response to each separate issue.

b. Decisional issues. An item submitted as an issue by an applicant in accordance with this Manual shall be addressed as a decisional issue in the following circumstances:

(1) When the NDRB decides that a change in discharge should be granted, and the NDRB bases its decision in whole or in part on the applicant's issue; or

(2) When the NDRB does not provide the applicant with the full change in discharge requested, and the decision is based in whole or in part on the NDRB's disagreement on the merits with an issue submitted by the applicant.

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c. Response to items not addressed as decisional issues

(1) If the applicant receives the full change in discharge requested (or a more favorable change), that fact shall be noted and the basis shall be addressed as a decisional issue. No further response is required to other issues submitted by the applicant.

(2) If the applicant does not receive the full change in discharge requested with respect to either the character of or reason for discharge (or both), the NDRB shall address the items submitted by the applicant under paragraph 8.6, (Decisional Issues) unless one of the following responses is applicable:

(a) Duplicate issues. The NDRB may state that there is a full response to the issue submitted by the applicant under a specified decisional issue. This response may be used only when one issue clearly duplicates another or the issue clearly requires discussion in conjunction with another issue.

(b) Citations without principles and facts. The NDRB may state that the applicant's issue, which consists of a citation to a decision without setting forth any principles and facts from the decision that the applicant states are relevant to the applicant's case, does not comply with the requirements of subparagraph 8.2b(4).

(c) Unclear issues. The NDRB may state that it cannot respond to an item submitted by the applicant as an issue because the meaning of the item is unclear. An issue is unclear if it cannot be understood by a reasonable person familiar with the discharge review process after a review of the materials considered.

(d) Nonspecific issues. The NDRB may state that it cannot respond to an item submitted by the applicant as an issue because it is not specific. A submission is considered not specific if a reasonable person familiar with the discharge review process after a review of the materials considered cannot determine the relationship between the applicant's submission and the particular circumstances of the case. This response may be used only if the submission is expressed in such general terms that no other response is applicable. For example, if the NDRB disagrees with the applicant as to the relevance of matters set forth in the submission, the NDRB normally will set forth the nature of the disagreement with respect to decisional issues, or it will reject the applicant's position. If the applicant's submission is so general that none of those provisions is applicable, then the NDRB may state that it cannot respond because the item is not specific.

8.6 Decisional Issues

a. General. Under the guidance in this section, the decisional

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document shall discuss the issues that provide a basis for the decision whether there should be a change in the character of or reason for discharge. In order to enhance clarity, the NDRB should not address matters other than issues relied upon in the decision or raised by the applicant.

(1) Partial change. When the decision changes a discharge, but does not provide the applicant with the full change in discharge requested, the decisional document shall address both the issues upon which change is granted and the issues upon which the NDRB denies the full change requested.

(2) Relationship of issue to character of or reason for discharge. Generally, the decisional document should specify whether a decisional issue applies to the character of or reason for discharge (or both), but it is not required to do so.

(3) Relationship of an issue to propriety or equity

(a) If an applicant identifies an issue as pertaining to both propriety and equity, the NDRB will consider it under both standards.

(b) If an applicant identifies an issue as pertaining to the propriety of the discharge (for example, by citing a propriety standard or otherwise claiming that a change in discharge is required as a matter of law), the NDRB shall consider the issue solely as a matter of propriety. Except as provided in paragraph 8.6a(3)(d), the NDRB is not required to consider such an issue under the equity standards.

(c) If the applicant's issue contends that the NDRB is required as a matter of law to follow a prior decision by setting forth an issue of propriety from the prior decision and describing its relationship to the applicant's case, the issue shall be considered under the propriety standards and addressed under paragraph 8.6a or b.

(d) If the applicant's issue sets forth principles of equity contained in a prior NDRB decision, describes the relationship to the applicant's case, and contends that the NDRB is required as a matter of law to follow the prior case, the decisional document shall note that the NDRB is not bound by its discretionary decisions in prior cases. However, the principles cited by the applicant, and the description of the relationship of the principles to the applicant's case, shall be considered and addressed under the equity standards.

(e) If the applicant's issue cannot be identified as a matter of propriety or equity, the NDRB shall address it as an issue of equity.

b. Change of discharge: issues of propriety. If a change in the discharge is warranted under the propriety standards, the decisional document shall state that conclusion and list the errors of expressly retroactive

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changes in policy or violations of regulations that provide a basis for the conclusion. The decisional document shall cite the facts in the record that demonstrate the relevance of the error or change in policy to the applicant's case. If the change in discharge does not constitute the full change requested by the applicant, the reasons for not granting the full change shall be set forth.

c. Denial of the full change requested: issues of propriety

(1) If the decision rejects the applicant's position on an issue of propriety, or if it is otherwise decided on the basis of an issue of propriety that the full change in discharge requested by the applicant is not warranted, the decisional document shall note that conclusion.

(2) The decisional document shall list reasons for its conclusion on each issue of propriety under the following guidance:

(a) If a reason is based in whole or in part upon a regulation, statute, constitutional provision, judicial determination, or other source of law, the NDRB shall cite the pertinent source of law and the facts in the record that demonstrate the relevance of the source of law to the particular circumstances in the case.

(b) If a reason is based in whole or in part on a determination as to the occurrence or nonoccurrence of an event or circumstances, including a factor required by applicable service regulations to be considered for determination of the character of and reason for the applicant's discharge, the NDRB shall make a finding of fact for each such event or circumstance.

1. For each such finding, the decisional document shall list the specific source of the information relied upon. This may include the presumption of regularity in appropriate cases. If the information is listed in the service record section of the decisional document, a citation is not required.

2. If a finding of fact is made after consideration of contradictory evidence in the record (including information cited by the applicant or otherwise identified by members of the NDRB), the decisional document shall set forth the conflicting evidence and explain why the information relied upon was more persuasive than the information that was rejected. If the presumption of regularity is cited as the basis for rejecting such information, the decisional document shall explain why the contradictory evidence was insufficient to overcome the presumption. In an appropriate case, the explanation as to why the contradictory evidence was insufficient to overcome the presumption of regularity may consist of a statement that the applicant failed to provide sufficient corroborating evidence, or that the NDRB did not find the applicant's testimony to be sufficiently credible to overcome the presumption.

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(c) If the NDRB disagrees with the position of the applicant on an issue of propriety, the following guidance applies in addition to the guidance in paragraphs 8.6c(2)(a) and (b):

1. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position by explaining why it disagrees with the principles set forth in the applicant's issue (including principles derived from cases cited by the applicant in accordance with paragraph 8.2b(4)).

2. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position by explaining why the principles set forth in the applicant's issue (including principles derived from cases cited by the applicant in accordance with paragraph 8.2b(4)) are not relevant to the applicant's case.

3. The NDRB may reject an applicant's position by stating that the applicant's issue of propriety is not a matter upon which the NDRB grants a change in discharge, and by providing an explanation for this position. When the applicant indicates that the issue is to be considered in conjunction with one or more other specified issues, the explanation will address all such specified issues.

4. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position on the grounds that other specified factors in the case preclude granting relief, regardless of whether the NDRB agreed with the applicant's position.

5. If the applicant takes the position that the discharge must be changed because of an alleged error in a record associated with the discharge, and the record has not been corrected by the organization with primary responsibility for corrective action, the NDRB may respond that it will presume the validity of the record in the absence of such corrective action. If the organization empowered to correct the record is within the Department of Defense, the NDRB should provide the applicant with a brief description of the procedures for requesting correction of the record. If the NDRB on its own motion cites this issue as a decisional issue on the basis of equity, it shall address the issue.

6. When an applicant's issue contains a general allegation that a certain course of action violated his or her constitutional rights, the NDRB may respond in appropriate cases by noting that the action was consistent with statutory or regulatory authority, and by citing the presumption of constitutionality that attaches to statutes and regulations. If, on the other hand, the applicant makes a specific challenge to the constitutionality of the action by challenging the application of a statute or regulation in a particular set of circumstances, it is not sufficient to respond solely by citing the presumption of constitutionality of the statute or regulation when the applicant is not challenging the constitutionality of the statute or regulation. Instead, the response must address the specific circumstances of the case.

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d. Denial of the full change in discharge requested when propriety is not at issue. If the applicant has not submitted an issue of propriety and the NDRB has not otherwise relied upon an issue of propriety to change the discharge, the decisional document shall contain a statement to that effect. The NDRB is not required to provide any further discussion as to the propriety of the discharge.

e. Change of discharge: issues of equity. If the NDRB concludes that a change in the discharge is warranted under the equity standards, the decisional document shall list each issue of equity upon which this conclusion is based. The NDRB shall cite the facts in the record that demonstrate the relevance of the issue to the applicant's case. If the change in discharge does not constitute the full change requested by the applicant, the reasons for not giving the full change requested shall be discussed.

f. Denial of the full change in discharge requested: issues of equity

(1) If the NDRB rejects the applicant's position on an issue of equity, or if the decision otherwise provides less than the full change in discharge requested by the applicant, the decisional document shall note that conclusion.

(2) The NDRB shall list reasons for its conclusion on each issue of equity under the following guidance:

(a) If a reason is based in whole or in part upon a regulation, statute, constitutional provision, judicial determination, or other source of law, the NDRB shall cite the pertinent source of law and the facts in the record that demonstrate the relevance of the source of law to the exercise of discretion on the issue of equity in the applicant's case.

(b) If a reason is based in whole or in part on a determination as to the occurrence or nonoccurrence of an event or circumstance, including a factor required by applicable service regulations to be considered for determination of the character of and reason for the applicant's discharge, the NDRB shall make a finding of fact for each such event or circumstance.

1. For each such finding, the decisional document shall list the specific source of the information relied upon. This may include the presumption of regularity in appropriate cases. If the information is listed in the service record section of the decisional document, a citation is not required.

2. If a finding of fact is made after consideration of contradictory evidence in the record (including information cited by the applicant or otherwise identified by members of the NDRB), the decisional document shall set forth the conflicting evidence and explain why the

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information relied upon was more persuasive than the information that was rejected. If the presumption of regularity is cited as the basis for rejecting such information, the decisional document shall explain why the contradictory evidence was insufficient to overcome the presumption. In an appropriate case, the explanation as to why the contradictory evidence was insufficient to overcome the presumption of regularity may consist of a statement that the applicant failed to provide sufficient corroborating evidence, or that the NDRB did not find the applicant's testimony to be sufficiently credible to overcome the presumption.

(c) If the NDRB disagrees with the position of the applicant on an issue of equity, the following guidance applies in addition to the guidance in paragraphs above:

1. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position by explaining why it disagrees with the principles set forth in the applicant's issue (including principles derived from cases cited by the applicant).

2. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position by explaining why the principles set forth in the applicant's issue (including principles derived from cases cited by the applicant) are not relevant to the applicant's case.

3. The NDRB may reject an applicant's position by explaining why the applicant's issue is not a matter upon which the NDRB grants a change in discharge as a matter of equity. When the applicant indicates that the issue is to be considered in conjunction with other specified issues, the explanation will address all such specified issues.

4. The NDRB may reject the applicant's position on the grounds that other specified factors in the case preclude granting relief, regardless of whether the NDRB agreed with the applicant's position.

5. If the applicant takes the position that the discharge should be changed as a matter of equity because of an alleged error in a record associated with the discharge, and the record has not been corrected by the organization with primary responsibility for corrective action, the NDRB may respond that it will presume the validity of the record in the absence of such corrective action. However, the NDRB will consider whether it should exercise its equitable powers to change the discharge on the basis of the alleged error. If it declines to do so, it shall explain why the applicant's position did not provide a sufficient basis for the change in the discharge requested by the applicant.

(d) When the NDRB concludes that aggravating factors outweigh mitigating factors, the NDRB must set forth reasons such as the seriousness of the offense, specific circumstances surrounding the offense, number of offenses, lack of mitigating circumstances, or similar factors. The NDRB is

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not required however, to explain why it relied on any such factors unless the applicability or weight of such a factor is expressly raised as an issue by the applicant.

(e) If the applicant has not submitted any issues and the NDRB has not otherwise relied upon an issue of equity for a change in discharge, the decisional document shall contain a statement to that effect, and shall note that the major factors upon which the discharge was based are set forth in the service record portion of the decisional document.

#### 8.7 Record of NDRB Proceedings

a. When the proceedings in any review have been concluded, a record thereof will be prepared. Records may include written records, electromagnetic records, audio and/or videotape recordings, or a combination.

b. At a minimum, the record will include the following:

- (1) the application for review;
- (2) a record of the testimony in either verbatim, summarized, or recorded form at the option of the NDRB;
- (3) documentary evidence or copies, other than the military service record considered by the NDRB;
- (4) briefs and arguments submitted by or on behalf of the applicant;
- (5) advisory opinions considered by the NDRB, if any;
- (6) the findings, conclusions, and reasons developed by the NDRB;
- (7) notification of the NDRB's decision to the cognizant custodian of the applicant's records, or reference to the notification document;
- (8) A copy of the decisional document.

#### 8.8 Issuance of Decisions Following Discharge Review

The applicant and counsel or representative, if any, shall be provided with a copy of the decisional document and of any further action in review. Final notification of decisions shall be issued to the applicant with a copy to the counsel or representative, if any, and to the service manager concerned.

a. Notification to applicants, with copies to counsel or representatives, shall normally be made through the U.S. Postal Service. Such notification shall consist of a notification of decision, together with a copy of the decisional document.

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b. Notification to the service manager shall be for the purpose of appropriate action and inclusion of review matter in personnel records. Such notification shall bear appropriate certification of completeness and accuracy.

c. Actions on review by superior authority, when occurring, shall be provided to the applicant and counsel or representative in the same manner as to the notification of the review decision.

#### 8.9 Final Disposition of the Record of Proceedings

The original decisional document and all appendices thereto, shall in all cases be incorporated in the military service record of the applicant and the service record shall be returned to the custody of the appropriate record holding facility. If a portion of the original record of proceedings cannot be stored with the service record, the service record shall contain a notation as to the place where the record is stored. Other copies including any electromagnetic records, audio and/or videotape recordings or any combination thereof shall be filed in the NDRB case folder and disposed of in accordance with appropriate naval regulations.

#### 8.10 Availability of Discharge Review Board Documents for Inspection and Copying

a. A copy of the decisional document prepared in accordance with Chapter 8 of this enclosure shall be made available for public inspection and copying promptly after a notice of final decision is sent to the applicant.

b. To prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, identifying details of the applicant and other persons will be deleted from documents made available for public inspection and copying.

(1) Names, addresses, social security numbers, and military service numbers must be deleted. Written justification shall be made for all other deletions and shall be available for public inspection.

(2) The NDRB shall ensure that there is a means for relating a decisional document number to the name of the applicant to permit retrieval of the applicant's records when required in processing a complaint.

c. Any other privileged or classified material contained in or appended to any documents required by this Manual to be furnished the applicant and counsel or representative or made available for public inspection and copying may be deleted only if a written statement on the basis for the deletions is provided the applicant and counsel or representative and made available for public inspection. It is not intended that the statement be so detailed as to reveal the nature of the withheld material.

d. NDRB documents made available for public inspection and copying

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shall be located in the Armed Forces Discharge Review/Correction Board Reading Room. The documents shall be indexed in a usable and concise form so as to enable the public, and those who represent applicants before the NDRB, to isolate from all these decisions that are indexed, those cases that may be similar to an applicant's case and that indicate the circumstances under or reasons for (or both) which the NDRB or the Secretary concerned granted or denied relief.

(1) The reading file index shall include, in addition to any other item determined by the NDRB, the case number, the date, character of, reason and authority for the discharge. It shall also include the decisions of the NDRB and reviewing authority, if any, and the issues addressed in the statement of findings, conclusions, and reasons.

(2) The index shall be maintained at selected permanent locations throughout the United States. This ensures reasonable availability to applicants at least 30 days before a traveling panel review. A list of these locations shall be published in the Federal Register by the Department of the Army. The index shall also be made available at sites selected for traveling panels or hearing examinations for such periods as the NDRB is present and in operation. An applicant who has requested a traveling panel review shall be advised, in the notice of such review, of the permanent index locations.

(3) The Armed Forces Discharge Review/Corrections Board Reading Room shall publish indexes quarterly for all DRBs. The NDRB shall be responsible for timely submission to the Reading Room of individual case information required for update of the indexes. In addition, the NDRB shall be responsible for submission of new index categories based upon published changes in policy, procedures, or standards. These indexes shall be available for public inspection or purchase (or both) at the Reading Room. When the NDRB has accepted an application, information concerning the availability of the index shall be provided in the NDRB's response to the application.

#### 8.11 Privacy Act Information

Information protected under the Privacy Act is involved in the discharge review functions. The provisions of SECNAVINST 5211.5C shall be observed throughout the processing of a request for review of discharge or dismissal.

#### 8.12 Responsibilities of the Reading Room

a. Copies of decisional documents will be provided to individuals or organizations outside the NCR in response to written requests for such documents. Although the Reading Room shall try to make timely responses to such requests, certain factors such as the length of a request, the volume of other pending requests, and the impact of other responsibilities of the staff assigned to such duties may cause some delays. A fee may be charged for such documents under appropriate DOD and Department of the Army directives and

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regulations. The manual that accompanies the index of decisions shall notify the public that if an applicant indicates that a review is scheduled for a specific date, an effort will be made to provide requested decisional documents before that date. The individual or organization will be advised if that cannot be accomplished.

b. Correspondence relating to matters under the cognizance of the Reading Room (including requests for purchase of indexes) shall be addressed to:

DA Military Review Board Agency  
Attention: SFBA (Reading Room)  
Room 1E520  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310

#### 8.13 The Recommendation of the NDRB President

a. General. The president of the NDRB may forward cases for consideration by the Secretarial Review Authority (SRA). There is no requirement that the president submit a recommendation when a case is forwarded to the SRA. If the president makes a recommendation with respect to the character of or reason for discharge, however, the recommendation shall be prepared under the guidance in paragraph 8.13b.

b. Format for recommendation. If a recommendation is provided, it shall contain the president's view whether there should be a change in the character of or reason for discharge (or both). If the president recommends such a change, the particular change to be made shall be specified. The recommendation shall set forth the president's position on decisional issues and issues submitted by the applicant under the following guidance:

(1) Adoption of the NDRB's decisional document. The recommendation may state that the president has adopted the decisional document prepared by the majority. The president shall ensure that the decisional document meets the requirements of this enclosure.

(2) Adoption of the specific statements from the majority. If the President adopts the views of the majority only in part, the recommendation shall cite the specific matter adopted from the majority. If the president modifies a statement submitted by the majority, the recommendation shall set forth the modification.

(3) Response to issues not included in matter adopted from the majority. The recommendation shall set forth the following if not adopted in whole or in part from the majority:

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(a) The issues on which the president's recommendation is based. Each such decisional issue shall be addressed by the president.

(b) The president's response to items submitted as issues by the applicant.

(c) Reasons for rejecting the conclusion of the majority with respect to the decisional document which, if resolved in the applicant's favor, would have resulted in greater relief for the applicant than that afforded by the president's recommendation. Such issues shall be addressed under the principles in paragraph 8.6.

#### 8.14 Secretarial Review Authority (SRA)

a. Review by the SRA. The Secretarial Review Authority (SRA) is the Secretary concerned or the official to whom Secretary's discharge review authority has been delegated.

(1) The SRA may review the following types of cases before issuance of the final notification of a decision:

(a) Any specific case in which the SRA has an interest.

(b) Any specific case that the president of the NDRB believes is of significant interest to the SRA.

(2) Cases reviewed by the SRA shall be considered under the standards set forth in this part.

#### b. Processing the decisional document

(1) The decisional document shall be transmitted by the NDRB president under paragraph 8.13.

(2) The following guidance applies to cases that have been forwarded to the SRA except for cases reviewed on the NDRB's own motion, without the participation of the applicant or the applicant's counsel:

(a) The applicant and counsel or representative, if any, shall be provided with a copy of the proposed decisional document, including the NDRB president's recommendation to the SRA, if any. Classified information shall be summarized.

(b) The applicant shall be provided with a reasonable period of time, but not less than 25 days, to submit a rebuttal to the SRA. Any issue in rebuttal consists of a clear and specific statement by the applicant in support of or in opposition to the statements of the NDRB or NDRB president on decisional issues and other clear and specific issues that were submitted

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by the applicant. The rebuttal shall be based solely on matters in the record before the NDRB closed the case for deliberation or in the president's recommendation.

c. Review of the decisional document. If corrections in the decisional document are required, the decisional document shall be returned to the NDRB for corrective action. The corrected decisional document shall be sent to the applicant (and counsel, if any), but a further opportunity for rebuttal is not required unless the correction produces a different result or includes a substantial change in the decision by the NDRB (or NDRB president) of the issues raised by the majority or the applicant.

d. The addendum of the SRA. The decision of the SRA shall be in writing and shall be appended as an addendum to the decisional document under the guidance in this subsection.

(1) The SRA's decision. The addendum shall set forth the SRA's decision whether there will be a change in the character of or reason for discharge (or both); if the SRA concludes that a change is warranted, the particular change to be made shall be specified. If the SRA adopts the decision recommended by the NDRB or the NDRB president, the decisional document shall contain a reference to the matter adopted.

(2) Discussion of issues. In support of the SRA's decision, the addendum shall set forth the SRA's position on decisional issues, items submitted as issues by an applicant and issues raised by the NDRB and the NDRB president in accordance with the following guidance:

(a) Adoption of the NDRB president's recommendation. The addendum may state that the SRA has adopted the NDRB president's recommendation.

(b) Adoption of the NDRB's proposed decisional document. The addendum may state that the SRA has adopted the proposed decisional document prepared by the NDRB.

(c) Adoption of specific statements from the majority or the NDRB president. If the SRA adopts the views of the NDRB or the NDRB president only in part, the addendum shall cite the specific statements adopted. If the SRA modifies a statement submitted by the NDRB or the NDRB president, the addendum shall set forth the modification.

(d) Response to issues not included in matter adopted from the NDRB or the NDRB president. The addendum shall set forth the following if not adopted in whole or in part from the NDRB or the NDRB president:

1. A list of the issues on which the SRA's decision is based. Each such decisional document issue shall be addressed by the SRA.

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This includes reasons for rejecting the conclusion of the NDRB or the NDRB president with respect to decisional issues which, if resolved in the applicant's favor, would have resulted in a change to the discharge more favorable to the applicant than that afforded by the SRA's decision. Such issues shall be addressed under the principles in paragraph 8.6F.

2. The SRA's response to items submitted as issues by the applicant.

(3) Response to the rebuttal

(a) If the SRA grants the full change in discharge requested by the applicant (or a more favorable change), that fact shall be noted, the decisional issues shall be addressed and no further response to the rebuttal is required.

(b) If the SRA does not grant the full change in discharge requested by the applicant (or a more favorable change), the addendum shall list each issue in rebuttal submitted by an applicant in accordance with this section, and shall set forth the response of the SRA under the following guidance:

1. If the SRA rejects an issue in rebuttal, the SRA may respond in accordance with the principles in paragraph 8.6.

2. If the matter adopted by the SRA provides a basis for the SRA's rejection of the rebuttal material, the SRA may note that fact and cite the specific matter adopted that responds to the issue in rebuttal.

3. If the matter submitted by the applicant does not meet the requirements for rebuttal material, that fact shall be noted.

(4) Index entries. Appropriate index entries shall be prepared for the SRA's actions for matters that are not adopted from the NDRB's proposed decisional document.

8.15 Complaints

A complaint is any correspondence in which it is alleged that a decisional document issued by the NDRB or the SRA contains a specifically identified violation of reference (b) or any references thereto. Complaints will be reviewed pursuant to reference (b).

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## CHAPTER 9

## STANDARDS FOR DISCHARGE REVIEW

## 9.1 Objective of Discharge Review

The objective of a discharge review is to examine the propriety and equity of the applicant's discharge and to effect changes, if necessary. The standards of review and the underlying factors which aid in determining whether the standards are met shall be consistent with historical criteria for determining honorable service. No factors shall be established that require automatic change or denial of a change in a discharge. Neither the NDRB nor the Secretary of the Navy shall be bound by any methodology of weighting of the factors in reaching a determination. In each case, the NDRB shall give full, fair, and impartial consideration to all applicable factors before reaching a decision. An applicant may not receive a less favorable discharge than that issued at the time of separation. This does not preclude correction of clerical errors.

## 9.2 Propriety of the Discharge

a. A discharge shall be deemed to be proper unless, in the course of discharge review, it is determined that:

(1) There exists an error of fact, law, procedure, or discretion associated with the discharge at the time of issuance; and that the rights of the applicant were prejudiced thereby (such error shall constitute prejudicial error if there is substantial doubt that the discharge would have remained the same if the error had not been made); or

(2) A change in policy by the military service of which the applicant was a member, made expressly retroactive to the type of discharge under consideration, requires a change in the discharge.

b. When a record associated with the discharge at the time of issuance involves a matter in which the primary responsibility for corrective action rests with another organization (for example, another Board, agency, or court), the NDRB will recognize an error only to the extent that the error has been corrected by the organization with primary responsibility for correcting the record.

c. The primary function of the NDRB is to exercise its discretion on issues of equity by reviewing the individual merits of each application on a case-by-case basis. Prior decisions in which the NDRB exercised its discretion to change a discharge based on issues of equity (including the

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factors cited in such decisions or the weight given to factors in such decisions) do not bind the NDRB in its review of subsequent cases because no two cases present the same issues of equity.

d. The following applies to applicants who received less than fully honorable administrative discharges because of their civilian misconduct while in an inactive duty status in a reserve component and who were discharged or had their discharge reviewed on or after April 20, 1971: the NDRB shall either recharacterize the discharge to Honorable without any additional proceedings or additional proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with the Court's Order of December 3, 1981, in Wood v. Secretary of Defense to determine whether proper grounds exist for the issuance of a less than honorable discharge, taking into account that:

(1) An other than honorable (formerly undesirable) discharge for an inactive duty reservist can only be based upon civilian misconduct found to have affected directly the performance of military duties;

(2) A general discharge for an inactive duty reservist can only be based upon civilian misconduct found to have had an adverse impact on the overall effectiveness of the military, including military morale and efficiency.

### 9.3 Equity of the Discharge

A discharge shall be deemed to be equitable unless:

a. In the course of a discharge review, it is determined that the policies and procedures under which the applicant was discharged differ in material respects from policies and procedures currently applicable on a service-wide basis to discharges of the type under consideration, provided that:

(1) Current policies or procedures represent a substantial enhancement of the rights afforded a respondent in such proceedings; and

(2) There is substantial doubt that the applicant would have received the same discharge, if relevant current policies and procedures had been available to the applicant at the time of the discharge proceedings under consideration.

b. At the time of issuance, the discharge was inconsistent with standards of discipline in the military service of which the applicant was a member.

c. In the course of a discharge review, it is determined that relief is warranted based upon consideration of the applicant's service record and other evidence presented to the NDRB viewed in conjunction with the factors listed in this paragraph and the regulations under which the applicant was

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discharged, even though the discharge was determined to have been otherwise equitable and proper at the time of issuance. Areas of consideration include, but are not limited to:

(1) quality of service, as evidenced by factors such as:

(a) service history, including date of enlistment, period of enlistment, highest rank achieved, conduct and proficiency ratings (numerical and narrative);

(b) awards and decorations;

(c) letters of commendation or reprimand;

(d) combat service;

(e) wounds received in action;

(f) records of promotions and demotions;

(g) level of responsibility at which the applicant served;

(h) other acts of merit that may not have resulted in formal recognition through an award or commendation;

(i) length of service during the service period which is the subject of the discharge review;

(j) prior military service and type of discharge received or outstanding post service conduct to the extent that such matters provide a basis for a more thorough understanding of the performance of the applicant during the period of service which is the subject of the discharge review;

(k) convictions by court-martial;

(l) records of nonjudicial punishment;

(m) convictions by civil authorities while a member of the service, reflected in the discharge proceedings or otherwise noted in the service records;

(n) records of periods of unauthorized absence;

(o) records relating to a discharge in lieu of court-martial.

(2) Capability to serve, as evidenced by factors such as:

(a) Total capabilities. This includes an evaluation of

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matters such as age, educational level, and aptitude scores. Consideration may also be given as to whether the individual met normal military standards of acceptability for military service and similar indicators of an individual's ability to serve satisfactorily, as well as ability to adjust to military service.

(b) Family and personal problems. This includes matters in extenuation or mitigation of the reason for discharge that may have affected the applicant's ability to serve satisfactorily.

(c) Arbitrary or capricious actions. This includes actions by individuals in authority which constitute a clear abuse of such authority and that, although not amounting to prejudicial error, may have contributed to the decision to discharge the individual or unduly influence the characterization of service.

(d) Discrimination. This includes unauthorized acts as documented by records or other evidence.

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APPENDIX A

POLICY STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE - ADDRESSING CERTAIN  
CATEGORIES OF DISCHARGES

Enclosure (1)

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POLICY STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE - ADDRESSING CERTAIN  
CATEGORIES OF DISCHARGES

Secretary of Defense memorandum of August 13, 1971, to the Secretaries of the Military Departments, The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Subject: Review of Discharges Under Other Than Honorable Conditions Issued to Drug Users:

"Consistent with Department of Defense Directive 1300.11, October 23, 1970, and my memorandum of July 7, 1971, concerning rehabilitation and treatment of drug users, administrative discharges under other than honorable conditions issued solely on the basis of personal use of drugs or possession of drugs for the purpose of such use will be reviewed for recharacterization.

"Accordingly, each Secretary of a Military Department, acting through his Discharge Review Board, will consider applications for such review from former service members. Each Secretary is authorized to issue a discharge under honorable conditions upon establishment of facts consistent with this policy. Former service members will be notified of the results of the review. The Veterans' Administration will also be notified of the names of former service members whose discharges are recharacterized.

"The statute of limitations for review of discharges within the scope of this policy will be in accordance with 10 United States Code 1553.

"This policy shall apply to those service members whose cases are finalized or in process on or before July 7, 1971.

Secretary of Defense memorandum of April 28, 1972, to Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Subject: Review of Punitive Discharges Issued to Drug Users:

"Reference is made to Secretary Packard's memorandum of July 7, 1971, concerning rehabilitation and treatment of drug users, and my memorandum of August 13, 1971, subject: 'Review of Discharges Under Other Than Honorable Conditions Issued to Drug Users.'

"My August 13, 1971 memorandum established the current Departmental policy that administrative discharges under other than honorable conditions issued solely on the basis of personal use of drugs or possession of drugs for the purpose of such use will be reviewed for recharacterization to under honorable conditions.

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"It is my desire that this policy be expanded to include punitive discharges and dismissals resulting from approved sentences of courts-martial issued solely for conviction of personal use of drugs or possession of drugs for the purpose of such use.

"Review and recharacterization are to be effected, upon the application of former service members, utilizing the procedures and authority set forth in Title 10, United States Code, Sections 874(b), 1552 and 1553."

"This policy is applicable only to discharges which have been executed on or before July 7, 1971, or issued as a result of a case in process on or before July 7, 1971.

"Former service members requesting a review will be notified of the results of the review. The Veterans' Administration will also be notified of the names of former service members whose discharges are recharacterized."



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APPENDIX B

OATH OR AFFIRMATION TO BE ADMINISTERED TO  
DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

Enclosure (1)

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OATH OR AFFIRMATION TO BE ADMINISTERED TO  
DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

Prior to undertaking duties as a Board member, each person assigned to such duties in the precept of the Board shall execute the following oath or affirmation which shall continue in effect throughout service with the Board.

OATH/AFFIRMATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do swear or affirm that I will faithfully and impartially perform all the duties incumbent upon me as a member of the Naval Discharge Review Board; that I will fully and objectively inquire into and examine all cases coming before me; that I will, without regard to the status of the individual in any case, render my individual judgment according to the facts, my conscience and the law and regulations applicable to review of naval discharges, so help me God.

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**APPENDIX C**

**SAMPLES OF FORMATS EMPLOYED BY THE NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD**

**Enclosure (1)**



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD  
SUITE 905  
801 NORTH RANDOLPH STREET  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203

SECNAVINST 5420.174C

22 AUG 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO

Serial No.  
Date

From: Executive Secretary, Naval Discharge Review Board  
To: Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command

Subj: Notification of decision in certain naval discharge review cases

1. Pursuant to Title 10 United States Code Section 1553, and acting under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the Naval Discharge Review Board has reviewed the circumstances associated with the discharge from the Naval Service of the below listed individuals.

2. It is certified that the decision of the Board in each case is that no change of the discharge is warranted.

3. The available service records in each case have been returned to the custody of the National Personnel Records Center.

<u>DOCKET</u> <u>NUMBER</u>	<u>NAME/SOCIAL SECURITY NO.</u>	<u>CHARACTER OF</u> <u>DISCHARGE</u>	<u>CODE</u>
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Enclosure (1)

There are \_\_\_\_\_ names in this notification.



22 AUG 1984

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD  
SUITE 905  
801 NORTH RANDOLPH STREET  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203

IN REPLY REFER TO

Serial No.  
Date

From: Executive Secretary, Naval Discharge Review Board  
To: Commandant, United States Marine Corps

Subj: Notification of decision in certain naval discharge review cases

Encl: (1) Records of discharge review proceedings and service records of  
personnel listed below

1. Pursuant to Title 10 United States Code Section 1553, and acting under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the Naval Discharge Review Board has reviewed the circumstances associated with the discharge from the Naval Service of the below listed individuals.

2. It is certified that the decision of the Board in each case is that no change of the discharge is warranted.

3. It is requested that the accompanying copy of the record of discharge review proceedings in each case be incorporated in the appropriate service record.

DOCKET  
NUMBER

NAME/SOCIAL SECURITY NO.

CHARACTER OF  
DISCHARGE

CODE

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Enclosure (1)

There are \_\_\_\_\_ names in this notification.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD  
SUITE 905  
801 NORTH RANDOLPH STREET  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203

SECNAVINST 5420.174C

22 AUG 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO

Serial No.  
Date

From: Executive Secretary, Naval Discharge Review Board  
To: Commandant, United States Marine Corps

Subj: Notification of decision in certain naval discharge review cases

Encl: (1) Records of discharge review proceedings and service records of  
personnel listed below

1. Pursuant to Title 10 United States Code Section 1553, and acting under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the Naval Discharge Review Board has reviewed the circumstances associated with the discharge from the Naval Service of the below listed individuals.

2. The decision of the Board in each case is certified to be as it appears opposite the name of the former member.

3. The Commandant of the Marine Corps is requested to issue revised discharge certificates in accordance with the Board's decision in each case. It is further requested that the accompanying copy of the record of discharge review proceedings in each case be incorporated in the appropriate service record.

<u>DOCKET</u> <u>NUMBER</u>	<u>NAME/SOCIAL SECURITY NO.</u>	<u>CHARACTER OF</u> <u>ORIGINAL DIS</u>	<u>CHANGE TO</u> <u>TYPE/REASON</u>	<u>CODE</u>
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C-4

Enclosure (1)

There are \_\_\_\_\_ names in this notification.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
NAVAL DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARD  
SUITE 905  
801 NORTH RANDOLPH STREET  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203

SECNAVINST 5420.174C

22 AUG 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO

Serial No.  
Date

From: Executive Secretary, Naval Discharge Review Board  
To: Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command

Subj: Notification of decision in certain naval discharge review cases

Encl: (1) Records of discharge review proceedings and service records of  
personnel listed below

1. Pursuant to Title 10 United States Code Section 1553, and acting under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the Naval Discharge Review Board has reviewed the circumstances associated with the discharge from the Naval Service of the below listed individuals.

2. The decision of the Board in each case is certified to be as it appears opposite the name of the former member.

3. The Commander, Naval Military Personnel Command is requested to issue revised discharge certificates in accordance with the Board's decision in each case. It is further requested that the accompanying copy of the record of discharge review proceedings in each case be incorporated in the appropriate service record.

<u>DOCKET</u> <u>NUMBER</u>	<u>NAME/SOCIAL SECURITY NO.</u>	<u>CHARACTER OF</u> <u>ORIGINAL DIS</u>	<u>CHANGE TO</u> <u>TYPE/REASON</u>	<u>CODE</u>
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Enclosure (1)

There are \_\_\_\_\_ names in this notification.

**22 AUG 1984**

**APPENDIX D**

**VETERANS' BENEFITS**

**Enclosure (1)**



SECNAVINST 5420.174C

22 AUG 1984

PUBLIC LAW 95-126—OCT. 8, 1977

## VETERANS' BENEFITS

29-139 O - 77 (134)

Enclosure (1)

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22 AUG 1984

91 STAT. 1106

PUBLIC LAW 95-126—OCT. 8, 1977

Public Law 95-126  
95th Congress

An Act

Oct. 8, 1977

[S. 1307]

To deny entitlement to veterans' benefits to certain persons who would otherwise become so entitled solely by virtue of the administrative upgrading under temporarily revised standards of other than honorable discharges from service during the Vietnam era; to require case-by-case review under uniform, historically consistent, generally applicable standards and procedures prior to the award of veterans' benefits to persons administratively discharged under other than honorable conditions from active military, naval, or air service; and for other purposes.

Veterans'  
benefits.  
Entitlement,  
denial to certain  
veterans with  
upgraded  
discharges.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) section 3103 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by—*

(1) inserting "or on the basis of an absence without authority from active duty for a continuous period of at least one hundred and eighty days if such person was discharged under conditions other than honorable unless such person demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Administrator that there are compelling circumstances to warrant such prolonged unauthorized absence." after "deserter," in subsection (a), and by inserting a comma and "notwithstanding any action subsequent to the date of such discharge by a board established pursuant to section 1553 of title 10" before the period at the end of such subsection; and

(2) adding at the end of such section the following new subsection:

Review.

10 USC 1553.

Application.

"(e) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, (A) no benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration shall be provided, as a result of a change in or new issuance of a discharge under section 1553 of title 10, except upon a case-by-case review by the board of review concerned, subject to review by the Secretary concerned, under such section, of all the evidence and factors in each case under published uniform standards (which shall be historically consistent with criteria for determining honorable service and shall not include any criterion for automatically granting or denying such change or issuance) and procedures generally applicable to all persons administratively discharged or released from active military, naval, or air service under other than honorable conditions; and (B) any such person shall be afforded an opportunity to apply for such review under such section 1553 for a period of time terminating not less than one year after the date on which such uniform standards and procedures are promulgated and published.

Benefits  
entitlement,  
limitation.  
Review.

50 USC app.  
462 note.

"(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

"(A) no person discharged or released from active military, naval, or air service under other than honorable conditions who has been awarded a general or honorable discharge under revised standards for the review of discharges, (i) as implemented by the President's directive of January 19, 1977, initiating further action with respect to the President's Proclamation 4313 of September 16, 1974, (ii) as implemented on or after April 5, 1977, under the Department of Defense's special discharge review program, or (iii) as implemented subsequent to April 5, 1977, and not made applicable to all persons administratively discharged or released from active military, naval, or air service under other than

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PUBLIC LAW 95-126—OCT. 8, 1977

91 STAT. 1107

honorable conditions, shall be entitled to benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration except upon a determination, based on a case-by-case review, under standards (meeting the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subsection) applied by the board of review concerned under section 1553 of title 10, subject to review by the Secretary concerned, that such person would be awarded an upgraded discharge under such standards; and

10 USC 1553.

"(B) such determination shall be made by such board (i) on an expedited basis after notification by the Veterans' Administration to the Secretary concerned that such person has received, is in receipt of, or has applied for such benefits or after a written request is made by such person or such determination, (ii) on its own initiative within one year after the date of enactment of this paragraph in any case where a general or honorable discharge has been awarded on or prior to the date of enactment of this paragraph under revised standards referred to in clause (A) (i), (ii), or (iii) of this paragraph, or (iii) on its own initiative at the time a general or honorable discharge is so awarded in any case where a general or honorable discharge is awarded after such enactment date.

Expedited determination.

If such board makes a preliminary determination that such person would not have been awarded an upgraded discharge under standards meeting the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subsection, such person shall be entitled to an appearance before the board, as provided for in section 1553(c) of title 10, prior to a final determination on such question and shall be given written notice by the board of such preliminary determination and of his or her right to such appearance. The Administrator shall, as soon as administratively feasible, notify the appropriate board of review of the receipt of benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration, or of the application for such benefits, by any person awarded an upgraded discharge under revised standards referred to in clause (A) (i), (ii), or (iii) of this paragraph with respect to whom a favorable determination has not been made under this paragraph."

Appearance before board. Notice.

(b)(1) The Secretary of Defense shall fully inform each person awarded a general or honorable discharge under revised standards for the review of discharges referred to in section 3103(e)(2)(A) (i), (ii), or (iii) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(2) of this section, of his or her right to obtain an expedited determination under section 3103(e)(2)(B)(i) of such title and of the implications of the provisions of this Act for each such person.

Board of review. notification.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Defense shall inform each person who applies to a board of review under section 1553 of title 10, United States Code, and who appears to have been discharged under circumstances which might constitute a bar to benefits under section 3103(a) of title 38, United States Code, (A) that such person might possibly be administratively found to be entitled to benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration only through the action of a board for the correction of military records under section 1552 of such title 10 or the action of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs under section 3103 of such title 38, and (B) of the procedures for making application to such section 1552 board for such purpose and to the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs for such purpose (including the right to proceed concurrently under such sections 3103, 1552, and 1553).

Information. notification. 38 USC 3103 note.

SEC. 2. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs shall provide the type of health care and

Health care and benefits. 38 USC 3103 note.

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2-2 AUG 1984

91 STAT. 1108

PUBLIC LAW 95-126—OCT. 8, 1977

38 USC 601  
et seq.

38 USC 3103.

"Discharge  
or release."38 USC  
3103 note.Effective dates.  
38 USC 3103  
note.

related benefits authorized to be provided under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, for any disability incurred or aggravated during active military, naval, or air service in line of duty by a person other than a person barred from receiving benefits by section 3103(a) of such title, but shall not provide such health care and related benefits pursuant to this section for any disability incurred or aggravated during a period of service from which such person was discharged by reason of a bad conduct discharge.

SEC. 3. Paragraph (18) of section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(18) The term 'discharge or release' includes (A) retirement from the active military, naval, or air service, and (B) the satisfactory completion of the period of active military, naval, or air service for which a person was obligated at the time of entry into such service in the case of a person who, due to enlistment or reenlistment, was not awarded a discharge or release from such period of service at the time of such completion thereof and who, at such time, would otherwise have been eligible for the award of a discharge or release under conditions other than dishonorable."

SEC. 4. In promulgating, or making any revisions of or amendments to, regulations governing the standards and procedures by which the Veterans' Administration determines whether a person was discharged or released from active military, naval, or air service under conditions other than dishonorable, the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs shall, in keeping with the spirit and intent of this Act, not promulgate any such regulations or revise or amend any such regulations for the purpose of, or having the effect of, (1) providing any unique or special advantage to veterans awarded general or honorable discharges under revised standards for the review of discharges described in section 3103(e)(2)(A)(i), (ii), or (iii) of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 1(a)(2) of this Act, or (2) otherwise making any special distinction between such veterans and other veterans.

SEC. 5. This Act shall become effective on the date of its enactment, except that—

(1) section 2 shall become effective on October 1, 1977, or on such enactment date, whichever is later; and

(2) the amendments made by section 1(a) shall apply retroactively to deny benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration, except that, notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(A) with respect to any person who, on such enactment date is receiving benefits under laws administered by the Veterans' Administration, (i) such benefits shall not be terminated under paragraph (2) of section 3103(e) of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 1(a)(2) of this Act, until (I) the day on which a final determination not favorable to the person concerned is made on an expedited basis under paragraph (2) of such section 3103(e), (II) the day following the expiration of ninety days after a preliminary determination not favorable to such person is made under such paragraph, or (III) the day following the expiration of one hundred and eighty days after such enactment date, whichever day is the earliest, and (ii) the United States shall not make any claim to recover the value of any benefits provided to such person prior to such earliest day;

(B) with respect to any person awarded a general or honorable discharge under revised standards for the review of discharges referred to in clause (A)(i), (ii), or (iii) of such

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paragraph who has been provided any such benefits prior to such enactment date, the United States shall not make any claim to recover the value of any benefits so provided; and

(C) the amendments made by clause (1) of section 1(a) shall apply (i) retroactively only to persons awarded general or honorable discharges under such revised standards and to persons who, prior to the date of enactment of this Act, had not attained general eligibility for such benefits by virtue of (1) a change in or new issuance of a discharge under section 1553 of title 10, United States Code, or (II) any other provision of law, and (ii) prospectively (on and after such enactment date) to all other persons.

Approved October 8, 1977.

Enclosure (1)